

MR. BLOOD'S
ELECTION SERMON.



1017

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED BEFORE
THE HONORABLE LEGISLATURE
OF THE
State of Vermont ;
CONVENED AT
RUTLAND, *October 11th, 1792.*
BEING THE DAY OF
General Election.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

By CALEB BLOOD,

PASTOR OF A BAPTIST CHURCH IN SHAFTSBURY.

PRINTED AT RUTLAND BY ANTHONY HASWELL.

In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, October 12th, 1792.

RESOLVED, That Messrs. EMMONS, AIKEN and I. SMITH, be a committee to wait on the reverend Mr. BLOOD, to return him the thanks of this House, for his ELECTION SERMON, delivered yesterday, and request a copy of the same for the press,

Attest.

RICHARD WHITNEY, Clerk.



In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, October 19th, 1793.

RESOLVED, That the Committee appointed to wait on the reverend Mr. BLOOD, with the thanks of this House, for his ELECTION SERMON, and request a copy of the same for the press,—be a committee to procure three hundred copies thereof to be printed.

Attest.

RICHARD WHITNEY, Clerk.



Election Sermon.

ECCLESIASTES iii, 15.

THAT WHICH HATH BEEN, IS NOW ; AND THAT
WHICH IS TO BE HATH ALREADY BEEN ; AND
GOD REQUIRETH THAT WHICH IS PAST.

IT is hard to find a more complicated character, in all the annals of time, than that of *Solomon*. The first part of his life presents us with the greatest instance of human sagacity, and wisdom, joined with a special regard to religion and virtue, but a second part was filled up with luxury and wickedness.

THE just portrait we have of this complex character, not only exhibits the impartiality of the sacred history ; but is joined with a display of infinite wisdom.

GOD in his all wise providence, raised *Solomon*, to the very summit of worldly glory. There was scarce a single thing in all the rich variety of nature's garden, but he might partake of at his pleasure. But alas ! instead of improving the mercies he had to the glory of that God from whom they came ; he laid the reins on the neck of his lusts, and gave a loose to almost every vain desire. This conduct of *Solomon* appears the more exceedingly criminal, when we consider his exalted station in life, which gave him a superior influence among men.

It

It pleased the Lord however to magnify the infinite riches of his grace, in making this celebrated king of Israel, a true penitent for all his sin. This occasioned *him* to write the book, of which the words now read are a part. This indeed contains as full, and ample a confession as any we shall find extant upon earth.

By this means the Lord has graciously left a sacred record, a standing monitor to the world. By which we are assured, that however great our abilities, however high our attainments in wisdom and knowledge ; or if we are raised to the summit of worldly honor and riches, yet that we are poor, fallible, changing creatures, wholly dependant on him that made us. By this we are assured that all plans and systems, founded in human wisdom, however we may think them placed on a sure basis, or arranged with the greatest coherence ; yet they are subject to error.

It is often that the turning of but one leaf in the book of divine providence, makes us sensible, that the firmness of their foundation, is not sufficient to dissipate our fears ; or prevent the disappointment of our most sanguine expectations. Well did the prophet say, Isaiah ii. 22 *Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of.* Again Psalms xxxix, 5. *Verily every man at his best estate, is altogether vanity.* This king of Israel, deeply sensible of this humiliating truth and the madness of his own sin and folly while he anticipated the scene

scene of trouble that must come upon his family and subjects by his means; was led, in our context, particularly to warn others of the changing, fluctuating state, of all men and things, in this sinful world: and of the great necessity of our engrossing in our affections some superior objects for delight.

ROVING in his thoughts, through the wild confusion, of a sinful world; he at length found the desired object, (viz.) The system of God's unchanging government, and the glory of his character displayed therein, for the good of being. Like the dove of Noah, he here found an ark of rest. Here he had found a system that could suffer no change. *I know,* says he, verse 14th. *That whatsoever God doth it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doth it that men should fear before him.*

FURTHER to express his views, of its unchanging sameness, he makes use of the words of our text. *That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been, and God requireth that which is past.*

THIS sacred passage, therefore, affords us this soul-consoling doctrine; (viz.) that that eternal rule of righteousness, contained in God's moral government, and the ground of our acceptance with him, is so infinitely perfect, and so well suited to the capacities, and circumstances of his creatures, on every occasion, that it can admit of no change. But that which hath
been

been the rule of our conduct towards God & our fellow men, and that which hath been the ground of our acceptance with God, is now ; and that which is to be hath already been. And likewise that the same virtuous exercises, that were required in past ages of the world, are required now.

For our further improvement of this subject on the present important occasion we shall observe,

I. THAT the scheme of divine administration, both in its nature and requirements, is so suited to the capacities of men, that it is the indispensable duty, of all ranks of men, without distinction, cheerfully to submit to, and obey God therein.

II. THAT this obedience only, can afford substantial and lasting satisfaction to the human heart.

III. THAT this obedience will qualify us to fill our several stations in life, as well in the civil as the ecclesiastical kingdom, to the glory of God and the good of our fellow men.

I. THAT the scheme of divine administration, both in its nature and requirements, is so suited to the capacities of men, that it is the indispensable duty, of all ranks of men, without distinction, cheerfully to submit to and obey God therein.

THE nature of divine government is like its author, infinitely holy, just and good. Its holy nature is easily seen, when we consider its great
end

and and design ; which is to assert the rights of the Godhead, and invariably to vindicate truth and suppress falsehood : and that in a manner directly tending to the general good of being.

ONE very considerable branch of divine operation, is to be seen in the creation of the world : in which there are creatures made of different ranks, and their different stations assigned them, exactly according to their various capacities. As we are favored with a rank among the creatures of God, what more immediately concerns us to know, is, *our* own station in the scale of being, and what is the business assigned us therein.

THAT we are made rational creatures, capable of contemplating upon and exploring objects presented to our view, is a truth, this respectable audience, will think it needless to use arguments to prove.

If this be granted we are necessitated to believe, that we are capable, in some measure, to judge of the quality of those objects ; and feel ourselves consciously concerned, to estimate them according to their real value. The most valuable objects, therefore, that come within the compass of our speculation, justly merit our greatest attention. Nor can this be esteemed a hardship to a rational mind, if rightly disposed, Should we not indeed feel ourselves greatly injured, if we were prohibited contemplation, on the best objects presented to our view, and were obliged to fill up all our searches and researches on an inferior good.

ONE part of the business, therefore assigned us in the system, and which appears well adapted to our capacities, is to employ our thoughts in contemplating on, and in forming a right judgment of those glorious perfections of the Deity, which are so clearly manifested in his works.

ANOTHER branch of our work is, always to be employed in loving those objects that are made known to us, according to their real worth.

THIS also is an easy yoke, well suited to our necks. That we are capable of loving objects of a moral nature, will hardly be denied : for as we cannot be delighted in objects that we cannot love, we either must allow that we are incapacitated for any higher enjoyments, than those which are merely natural, or that we are capable, affectionately to embrace, the important ideas of holiness and virtue. If we admit the former, then we are driven to the disagreeable necessity of believing, that there are no objects for delight, afforded us in the universe, but those which our context and our own experience proves, to be as unstable as water, and intirely insufficient. If the latter then, we must allow, that our supreme affection and delight, ought ever to be placed on that God who is the essence of all possible excellence and glory.

TWO principles of common justice dictate, that every being ought to be loved according to their real worth ; as God therefore is the supreme good in the universe, he justly claims our supreme

preme affections. This is so well suited to our capacities, that if we rove in our affections through all the glories of this world, we shall find no rest; nothing permanent, no suitable object for delight: untill we say with the Psalmist, *Return unto thy rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Psalms, cx, 7. I am not insensible that the cavils of wicked men are often raised against the degree of this holy exercise which the divine law requires of us. But shall I ask, what is the extent of its requisitions? The Lord Jesus defines it thus, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.* Matthew, xxii, 37, 39.—On these two hang all the law and the prophets. This reduced to practice in heart, lip, and life, comprises the whole duty of man.

NOR can this justly be thought too severe; for there is nothing more required than all the heart, soul, and mind, that is, all the faculties that are given. And for God to give faculties to us capable of virtuous exercises, and not require the use of them would be unjust, and directly militate against the happiness of his creatures.

As to the love required to our fellow creatures, it is to love our neighbour as ourselves. This also is right and fit in the nature of things, for as every creature ought to be loved in proportion to its real worth, in the scale of being; and as our fellow men hold the same rank with us in the system, we ought therefore to love them as ourselves.

ANOTHER

ANOTHER idea implied, in this obedience to God, is an unreserved submission to his sovereign will. This also is just and reasonable : for as with the all-wise and omniscient Jehovah, there can be no possible error, either in judgment or design ; it is infinitely fit that he should have the sovereign disposal of all events.

Nor does this take any privilege from us ; seeing we are capacitated to be happy only in a cheerful obedience to him. So long as we may rest assured, that the judge of all the earth will do right, it can never afford us any uneasiness that he should govern, unless we are unwilling that right should take place.

THIS leads us to see the necessity of faith in God, as another branch of our duty to him. By faith I mean, that act of the mind, by which we affectionately embrace, and unreservedly rely, on the truth of God, which he has made manifest concerning his character and will : and those things which respect the relation we stand in to him, and our fellow creatures. No other evidence is necessary for the ground of this faith, than to be assured, that the doctrine proposed for our belief comes from God. That we are capable of believing the truth upon this evidence, will not be denied ; and for finite creatures to call in question the testimony of the God of truth, is a crime of the first magnitude. Hence saith the apostle, 1 John v. 10. *He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record God gave of his son.*

FROM

FROM the whole it appears that the nature of the divine government, in all its demands upon us, is perfectly suited to our capacities, and fully secures all our rights to us.

An impartial view of this made our Saviour say, Matt. xi, 29, 30. *Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

WE cannot therefore call in question the most sacred obligations that all men are under without distinction, to obey these divine precepts: seeing it is a law that necessarily exists, in consequence of our relation to God, as his creatures, and not arbitrarily imposed on us, by him, as a sovereign.

By this time, perhaps, some may think, that the speaker has forgotten the doctrine we so often hear from the pulpit, viz. that mankind are fallen, depraved creatures, wholly dead in trespasses and sins. Indeed I have not forgotten so great a truth, which is not only asserted by an apostle, Ephesians ii, 1, but is always written in indelible characters before my eyes. But we wish however to have skill enough to distinguish between the depravity of the human heart, and those faculties by which we are capacitated to obey God. The apostle hath well expressed the idea of depravity: *dead in trespasses and sins*. This death therefore cannot consist in reducing our natural faculties to a state of inactivity: otherwise we could not be active in trespasses and sins.

Depravity

Depravity therefore, must respect the disposition of the heart : and the sense is, that man, by his fall from God, has lost his original righteousness, and is now wholly and voluntarily opposed to virtue.

NOR can this justly be considered in the least degree to lessen our obligations : for it is not the virtue or vice that we possess, that is the bond of our obligation to God. Should a person guilty of treason against the state, be brought before this venerable court, and appear wilfully determined to pursue his villainy, would they judge that the vileness of his disposition should exculpate him from blame ? Would they not rather think that such a judgment would be taking sides with the criminal ? Neither can the vileness of our hearts, be any just excuse for our rebellion against God our rightful sovereign.

It may be said, if men are thus guilty, how is it God spares the criminal, and continues the world in its present state ? I answer, only upon the plan of grace which respects the unworthy. This GRACE however is exercised in a way perfectly consonant with the divine law and government.

HERE we see the necessity of a mediator, to make atonement for sin. It can be thought but doing justice to the subject, to advert for a few minutes to the character and work of Christ as mediator.

ST. John in the beginning of his gospel gives us the following important account of the character

after of Christ. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by him, and without him there was not any thing made that was made. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.*

FROM hence we learn, that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God, that all created things were made by him, that he is of the one undivided essence, equal with God, and that he became flesh, or took upon him our nature; so that he is very man as well as God: also that this God-man is full of grace and truth. Full of the designs of grace and mercy to a guilty world, and fully determined to exhibit that grace in a manner that should assert the truth, respecting the rights of the Godhead, and the honors of divine law and government.

No less a character than this, is equal to the work of a mediator between offended justice, and the offending sinner. As sin is against an infinite God, there must be an infinite display made of his disapprobation of it: otherwise his character and government could not be vindicated. The creature being finite, this display could not be made, in the execution of penalty on the sinner, in any other way, than that the sentence should extend to an infinite duration of punishment. Hence we see why the sacred scriptures threaten everlasting punishment upon the wicked.

Let us pause a moment ! What mean creature, however exalted in the scale of being, that would not blush to attempt the unequal task, of making an atonement answerable to the demands of infinite justice ? And should we not all shrink at the thought that divinity should change, and become a suffering advocate ? Here all created intelligences are thrown into a consternation ! condemnation to the criminal must sparkle in every eye ! Until the complex character of the *God-man* appears : who in his human nature was able by his obedience, perfectly to illustrate the glory, and vindicate the honors of the divine precepts : and by his suffering and death, fully to disclose the divine righteousness in the penal part of the law. Although his sufferings were comparatively short, yet the infinite dignity of his person was such, that he was able to bear the whole at once. In this obedience and suffering of Christ, we see a full display made, of that infinite rule of right contained in the divine law ; and of God's holy indignation against sin.

HERE we see a way opened for God to exercise grace and mercy, to the sinner, consistent with the rights of justice. Through this atonement the Holy Ghost is sent down to renew the hearts of men, and bring them to acknowledge the rights of justice in repentance for sin ; and by faith to trust alone in this complete righteousness of Christ for justification,—as the ground of our acceptance with God.

THIS

THis will appear the more consistent, when we consider that the Lord Jesus, not only suffered and died, but that he rose again from the dead; ascended up on high *who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.* Heb. viii. 1. And that all judgment is committed unto him, and all power both in heaven and earth. This gracious prince therefore, is become the rightful legislator of the world. Seated on a throne of grace his government towards us is a gracious administration. Hence it is the world is spared in its present state, and a space allowed us for repentance.

By this, I think we must be assured of our renewed obligations to love, fear and serve God, who has made such rich displays of himself; both as a God of grace and justice: and also, immediately, to repent of our sins, and believe the testimony which God hath given of his son. Otherwise our crimes will be greatly augmented in his sight. But it is time that I hastened to shew,

II. THAT this obedience only can afford substantial and lasting satisfaction to the human heart.

That object in the universe that is of the most real worth, in its own essential properties; must be thought the most delightful object for our contemplation: if we are rightly disposed and can have access to the knowledge of it.

THAT God is this supreme good, and that he has revealed himself to man as such, we have al-

ready noticed. And as we cannot be delighted in things that we have no knowledge of, it must be essential to our happiness to employ our thoughts in contemplating on the glories of the divine character. To pass this unnoticed is always to remain ignorant of, and destitute of delight in, the greatest good.

AGAIN, however much we may know of the qualities of an object, yet if we do not love it, the more we know of it the more disagreeable feelings we have; love therefore, to those excellencies of the divine character which he has revealed, is essential to our happiness.

THIS leads us to observe, that if we know and love God as he is, infinitely holy, just and good; with whom there can be no possible error, either in judgment or design; we cannot be happy unless we freely resign the disposal of all events into his hands. And to be deprived of believing in such a being, would be to prohibit our confidence in the supreme object of our delight.

FURTHERMORE, he who walks in this obedience, freely chooses God for his portion, and the chief object of his delight. Here he has *an inheritance that is incorruptible, and that fadeth not away*. In this he is not subject to disappointments as others are; though he may be disappointed in creature good, yet he can say with the prophet, Heb. iii, 17, 18. Although the figtree, the vine, the olive, the field and the flock should fail, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

As

As the divine law and government contains a perfect rule of right, it can never operate to the disadvantage of any one, that is an obedient subject. And as it is below the dignity of a rational conscious mind to be happy in opposition to right, it is easy to see that a conformity to the divine law is essential to our happiness. Indeed it is impossible for a man to be happy without the temper of mind that the law requires, viz. love or real benevolence; if we have not this we must be possessed of its opposite; unless we admit that we can fall into a state of entire indifference, and without any affectionate regard to any being whatever, which would be to fall below the rank of rational creatures.

THE opposite to benevolence is to estimate our own happiness, and the gratification of our own desires, above the honor of God, and the good of being in general. How miserable such a person must be! having set up himself in opposition to the divine glory and the general good of being, in the promotion of which all events must finally terminate: every event therefore in the universe must necessarily operate against him, and fill the mind with unremitted confusion and guilt: unless at times (while in this world) the mind is amused, and the conscience lull'd asleep, in the gratification of animal sensations.

BUT on the contrary, how happy is that soul, which glows with supreme love to God; and with undissembled benevolence to being in general. And while he rests assured that the allwise legislator

legislator of the world governs in the best manner, he delights himself in the sweet employment of glorifying him, and doing good to his fellow creatures. Thus, while the mind is released from the narrow circle of selfishness, it can rove in the extensive fields of truth and righteousness, and partake of the sweet fruits of holiness and virtue.

This benevolence to being in general, must include our love in particular to those of our own species, with whom we are more immediately conversant, and to whom we are more particularly called to administer good. And who can but see what a heaven upon earth we should have, if this disposition was to govern in families, neighbourhoods, towns, and kingdoms.

AGAIN, as without repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot please God, this also must be essential to our happiness. By repentance we turn from sin unto God, and cheerfully submit to his government: By faith we affectionately embrace, and unreservedly rely on the characters, offices and work of Christ as mediator, and receive his righteousness, as the alone matter of our justification: through which we receive the free pardon of all our sins, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

THIS righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; that which man had in his first state was not so. That righteousness he destroyed by disobedience. If we indeed were to be set back again upon the foot of creature righteousness, it would

would not be fit that an absolute promise of eternal life should be made us upon it : for we might destroy it again by sin, and become unrighteous. But this righteousness, completed by a redeemer, will everlastingly secure the honors of infinite justice, while grace is displayed in our redemption and justification. We see therefore, that here is a permanent foundation for hope and delight.

FURTHER, to illustrate that our happiness is connected with obedience to God, we may observe, that it unites us with, and engages us in, the same cause that God himself, the holy angels, the glorified spirits in heaven, and all the virtuous on earth are engaged in. The cause I mean is that of truth and righteousness. If therefore we are heartily engaged in this cause, we are in fellowship and agreement with them. Here we may rest assured of the divine approbation and protection. Here we shall share in the kind offices of angels, as ministering spirits, sent forth to *minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*. In this also, we shall enjoy the prayers of all the saints upon earth, and the good wishes of those in heaven. We may say then with the apostle, Rom. viii, 31 *If God be for us who can be against us.*

In this righteous cause we are assured of victory over all our enemies, and that they must fall victims to divine justice, in the end, unless we admit, that God, at last, will suffer virtue to become a prey to vice, and truth to falsehood. We come to observe,

III.

III. **THAT** this obedience will qualify us, to fill our several stations in life, as well in the civil as the ecclesiastical kingdom, to the glory of God and the good of our fellow men.

RIGHT views of God and his government, gives us right ideas of holiness, truth, righteousness and justice, administered according to the true principles of benevolence. That these are the principles on which all governments ought to be administered, will not be denied. That a competent degree of knowledge therefore, in this divine system, is needful in order to the right administration of government, is equally obvious. If then we have so filled up our searches and researches, as to have obtained a good degree of acquaintance with this infinitely perfect system; it will follow that we have acquired one very important qualification, to be useful either in church or state.

BUT on the contrary, to remain ignorant of this, is always to remain ignorant of what is right; and consequently not qualified to do right. Such ignorance as this is the cause why some men are so anxious to be promoted in places of public trust. Puffed up with a sense of their own importance, and stimulated from pecuniary motives, they eagerly rush into important stations in life, ignorant of the great business they undertake; and without any proper concern, either for the glory of God, or the good of society.

THE parable of Jotham, as in Judges, 9th chapter, gives a just portrait of such characters;
for

for while a becoming diffidence possessed the minds of those worthy characters, who may fitly be compared to the olive, the figtree and the vine; yet the bramble, not only destitute of those sweet fruits so useful to mankind, but are full of pricking thorns, was ready to accept the office of ruler over the trees. Brambles indeed are such selfish rulers! and experience often makes good the prophet's words: The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge. Micah vii, 4.

BUT those, whose real merit brings them to posts of honor, feel sensible that they have need of wisdom and prudence, need to ponder the paths of their feet, that they might so steer the helm of government, as to run clear of those fatal bars, that always lie in the narrow gulf of a wicked and selfish administration.

BUT knowledge only will not complete a virtuous character; love also to the truth we know is an essential qualification: for as we are generally governed by the supreme object of our delight, we shall never make it our chief concern to fill our several stations among men, in conformity to the divine character and will, unless he has our supreme affections. I do not say but that an unregenerate man, or one who has not true love to God, may be useful in civil society, and do many noble things, both in the legislative and executive departments, or that he may not do valiantly in the martial line, and in many other respects.

WICKED

WICKED men are not only often restrained, by the all powerful influence of Jehovah, from those vicious acts, which would be hurtful to society; but are sometimes influenced, contrary to the general bias of their minds, to do things that are for the general good. But this by no means argues, that we should tempt God, by filling the important places of public trust with wicked men. Neither does it argue, but that the truly virtuous mind is the best qualified to serve the public.

WHAT should we have left of a truly patriotic character, if we subtract from it all love to the perfect rule of right, and the general good of the people? He might indeed have great natural powers, and large acquired abilities, an easy powerful and pathetic address; but does not love to use them for the general good of society. We cannot but fear the consequences of promoting such a character. But when we see a man put into office, who possesses a real spirit of patriotism, it is with pleasure that we anticipate the happiness we expect to enjoy under his administration, as a minister of God for good to the people.

SUBJECTION to divine sovereignty, is also a useful qualification for men intrusted with the affairs of state; otherwise in the most trying and critical circumstances of government, he is liable to be thrown into anxiety and confusion: which will unfit him for those manly exercises which the important duties of his station calls for, in so interesting a period. As

As the character, offices and work of Christ, gives us the greatest and richest display of the divine character and government ; we can but think that faith in him, is at least a very useful qualification for a civil officer. Without this it is impossible to please God : because if we do not believe God, we do not put confidence in, nor rely on his testimony, but practically say, that he is a liar, which can be thought no less than an insult upon his INFINITE MAJESTY.

WE may not expect therefore than an unbeliever will ever act from the principles of true benevolence, in any thing that he does. But more especially we cannot expect it, from those who are so lost to all virtue, as to openly treat the character, offices, and work of Christ, as mediator, with contempt. Especially when we consider them so hardened in sin, as to rise in opposition to the testimony of God the Father, Son and Spirit ; and in opposition to the testimony of angels, of prophets, apostles, and all the saints in every age of the world ; also against the miraculous operations of the Holy Ghost, to confirm the divine mission of Christ, and his apostles ; and against all the corroborating testimonies of divine providence, in almost every age of the world.

I do not say, indeed, but that even those infidels, (under the restraints before mentioned) may do many things that may be for the public good. Yet I think that we cannot deny, but that a truly virtuous and benevolent mind is bet-

ter qualified to manage the great affairs of government, on which the general good so much depends.

AGAIN it is easy for an unprejudiced mind to see, that the temper and practice inculcated by the gospel of Christ, is essential to the good of society, viz. love to God and man, subjection to the divine will, faith in the system of righteousness and truth : also meekness and humility, calmness and patience, a desire to forgive injuries, and to do by others as we would that they should do by us. These things if reduced to practice, will make the child obedient to his parents, the parent to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; and makes the subjects yield all due submission to magistracy as an ordinance of God : and the magistrate to fill his important station, as a minister of God for good to the people. And who will say that these are not excellent qualifications for a civil officer.

It is objected, that in many instances, those rulers who have made the highest profession of the christian religion, have been the most tyrannical and cruel.

THIS I will not undertake to deny, but it is however to be remembered, that a profession only of religion, is very different from the real possession of it in heart and practice. Had those antichristian rulers (as I must call them) have been as much concerned to be governed by religion, as they were to govern it by the civil sword,

sword, they would never have invaded the sacred rights of conscience in the manner they did. But making religion a mere engine of state policy, and setting up its ministers to be supported by the civil arm; their office soon became a place of worldly honor and profit. This occasioned persons of superior advantages in life, merely from pecuniary views, to invade the sacred office. And what was the event but a scene of horrid priestcraft, attended with pernicious consequences. This I think however, is so far from any just objection, that it rather argues the necessity of pious and christian rulers. Such indeed, as have so sacred a regard for the rights and liberties of the people, both civil and religious, as that they will seek to preserve them inviolate.

I AM far from wishing to have America involved in the great error of blending the government of church and state together. But I heartily wish that all her rulers may be truly virtuous, and such as shall rule in the fear of God.

THEIR superior influence among men argues the necessity of it, their examples have great influence upon the common people. One vicious magistrate will do more towards corrupting the morals of the people, and lessening the energy of government, than ten others. Such is the depravity of man, that we shall scarce ever find a magistrate that is openly vile, but he has a number around him, that are glad to follow his pernicious examples;

examples ; and however such magistrates may do good in some things, yet the hurt they do eventually, far exceeds all the benefit we receive from them.

THE nature of a republican government, is another argument why virtue should be considered as a necessary qualification for a civil ruler. It is observed by an ingenious author, " that in despotic governments, the force of education is to inculcate fear ; in monarchical governments, to inculcate honor ; & in republican governments to inculcate virtue." This is true, for virtue is the basis of a free and republican government.

THIS virtue in the people principally consists in three things. 1st. In forming a constitution that is a proper basis for a virtuous government. 2d. In choosing virtuous rulers to administer upon it. 3d. In a cheerful submission to their righteous administration. But this golden chain is at once broken, unless we admit that virtue is a necessary qualification for a civil ruler.

FROM the whole it appears that the more we are conformed to the unchanging, and perfect rule of righteousness, the more solid and substantial happiness we have, and the better we are qualified to do good to others. What remains therefore is some reflections in suitable addresses.

OUR chief magistrate justly claims our first attention.

May it please your excellency,

It is with pleasure we behold you as God's minister

minister for good, to this great and growing people : your often and repeated election to the highest seat in this commonwealth, gives you the greatest assurance of the love and confidence of the people. May it ever be with grateful acknowledgements, that we as a people reflect on the goodness of our God, that has raised up one from amongst us, of our brethren, who was able and willing to take us by the hand in our infancy and weakness, and safely lead us forth into the brilliant fields of liberty, peace, and good government ; until we have justly merited the approbation and esteem of our sister states, and are accounted worthy to hold a seat in the government of the great and growing empire of America.

MAY it still please the great benefactor of the world, to scatter light in your paths, and safely conduct you through the many difficulties that attend the important station, that God and your brethren have called you to. We can assure you our most fervent prayers, that you may be succeeded in all your efforts to promote the general good of the state ; and in giving proper energy to government.

YOUR excellency is sensible that while you have the approbation and esteem of your brethren, it is of the last importance, that all the services done to your country, are done from such motives, as will meet the approbation of him, who is the great searcher of all hearts, and before whom all ranks of men must appear to give

give an account of the deeds done in the body.

SELF EXAMINATION well becomes one who fills the chair of state. A wrong temper of mind seldom fails to misguide the judgment ; the consequences of which are the more fatal, in proportion to the trust reposed in us. A mistake in the helmsman often proves fatal, both to the ship and all on board. The wise magistrate therefore, will examine his own heart, and will ascend the throne of power with the prayer of the psalmist. *Search me O God and know my heart ; try me and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

FOR one who fills the chair of state, to have the motives of his actions, enclosed in the doleful dungeon of selfishness and pride, in which there is no light, for right judging of matters, but what forces its way through the dreary grates of a stifled conscience, is far below the dignity of his station. And to die in such a state, is to go from a throne of power, and seat of judgment on earth, to be judged as a guilty criminal, at the bar of almighty God.

BUT on the contrary, if his eye is single to the glory of God, his whole body is full of light, and his patriotic breast will glow with desire for the general good of his subjects ; who are made to rejoice under his faithful administration. Your excellency, therefore, will feel the importance of being personally virtuous in heart, lip and life ;
otherwise

otherwise your sacred office, of so much consequence to the state, will not appear with that real importance which it deserves, and which is necessary to give proper energy to government.

MAY the Lord grant you grace and wisdom, to fill the important station you hold, to his glory and the people's good. That you at last may close a life of long usefulness here, with the approbation of him, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice.

SHALL I be indulged, while I include your excellency in an address to his honor the lieutenant governor, the honorable council, and house of representatives.

VENERABLE AND RESPECTFUL RULERS,

You are this day, by the free suffrages of your brethren, vested with the full power of legislation for a great and growing people: the oath of God is upon you, to maintain the sacred principles of our constitution. You have bound yourselves, by all that is sacred, to the faithful discharge of your office. In addition to your oath you will feel the sacred injunctions of the divine law, which must necessarily exist as long as truth remains sacred.

THIS law of love to God and man, is essential to a truly patriotic character. It becomes you therefore, as men, as citizens, and especially as rulers, to examine your own hearts, whether you have true evangelical repentance towards God, and that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that works by love and purifies the heart. Be assured,

ed, venerable sirs, that without this, although you may do many things that may be of public utility ; yet they will not be done from such motives, as will meet the approbation of the great judge of all hearts.

Your honors will also feel sensible, that your own importance as rulers, the good of society, and the energy of our excellent government, much depends on your being cloathed with practical piety.

For those who are concerned in enacting laws, suitable for the regulation of our conduct in civil life, to be guilty of wronging their creditors, by keeping them out of their just dues, or by over reaching, cheating and defrauding their neighbours ; or in any other way to injure their fellow citizens, in person, name or estate ; is in fact practically to say, that the laws they have made are not worthy to be regarded : which can never fail to lessen the energy of government.

A wise magistrate will set a constant guard over the words of his mouth ; that with a becoming moderation, he may express his resentment of injuries done him ; and have all his language such as shall tend to prevent others from an uncivil, profane way of treating their fellow citizens. A magistrate that is rough and profane in his language, is a monstrous character. He is not civil himself, and we cannot expect but that the practice, at least, will do hurt in the community. He is not the gentleman, for any person of sense knows, that a rough profane way of
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treating mankind, better fits the character of a clown than a gentleman. Can I suppose myself in danger of giving offence? No, I cannot think that so respectable a body, as I am now called to address, will think me too severe in censuring so great an evil: especially seeing it so much prevails in our land at the present day.

We, your children, shall look up to you as our political fathers, that all those officers who come under the direction of your wisdom to appoint, will be such characters as shall do honor to their office. Such as are men of integrity and uprightness. Such as shall make conscience of executing the law on offenders, and such whose examples shall give energy to government.

The institution of learning is of great consequence to a free people. Grateful acknowledgements are justly due to our wise legislators, whose liberal and friendly exertions, has given so early a birth to an institution of this kind, in this infant state. The tender mother of this promising infant, will never forget her sucking child, but will nourish and cherish it; from whom she may justly expect protection and support in her riper years.

As religion at all times, is a matter between God and individuals, your honors will never think it within the limits of your legislation, to dictate the conscience of a single individual. The unchangeable law of righteousness, forbids us to delegate such a power to any man, or body of

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men, either in church or state. I do not wish, however, to countenance those, who through fear of religious tyranny despise good order in society, and reject those friendly aids to the cause of our holy religion, which may justly be expected from our political fathers. Neither would I wish to be found with those, who wish for religious establishments by law ; which never fail of pernicious consequences both to church and state.

As a man, it is the duty of a magistrate, to befriend the cause of religion in the profession and practice of it. As the head of a family he should maintain family worship, and bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

PERMIT me here to introduce the words of an ingenuous author*, whose learning and experience adds weight to his sentiments. " As a magistrate he should be a nursing father to the church of Christ, by protecting all the peaceable members of it, from injury on account of religion ; and by securing to them the uninterrupted enjoyment of equal religious liberty." And after observing the necessity of union in the state, he adds, " On the other hand, if the magistrate destroys the equality of the subjects of the state on account of religion, he violates a fundamental principle of a free government, establishes a separate interest in it, and lays a foundation for disaffection to rulers, and endless quarrels among the people."

* DR. STILLMAN.

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THIS however, by no means prohibits the civil magistrate from enacting those laws that shall enforce the observance of those precepts in the christian religion, the violation of which is a breach of the civil peace; viz. such as forbid murder, theft, adultery, false witness, and injuring our neighbour, either in person, name, or estate. And among others, that of observing the Sabbath, should be enforced by the civil power. Otherwise, those irreligious persons who are so lost to virtue, as neither to regard divine worship, nor the time appointed for it, will not only interrupt us, by coming to our houses in our absence, and drawing off our children from good order and family government, but will also, in attending to their worldly business, disturb us in the hours of our most solemn devotions to God. And this is not all, but tyrannical and cruel masters will be allowed to subject their servants to a constant series of labour, without proper time to rest, or attend to the important concerns of a future world. One reason given by Moses for keeping the Sabbath, was, that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou.

As to the aid of the civil power to force men to support gospel ministers, I humbly conceive that it never can be necessary. This they will do freely, unless it is contrary either to their consciences, or wills; if contrary to their consciences, to force them is the worst of tyranny, if
contrary

Contrary to their wills, like Peter's sword it cuts off the ear, and fills the mind with prejudice against both the doctrine and the preacher, and of course does hurt to the cause of religion. All such as are friends to religion, are heartily willing to comply with those plain injunctions of heaven, that require the honorable support of gospel ministers. And if we would make them religious that are not, it is a poor way first to beset them by cutting their purse-strings with the civil sword, which lays a fatal bar against our having access to their consciences afterwards. It appears therefore, that as religion is a benefit to society, that forcing men to support its ministers, is a damage both to church and state.

MAY the great legislator of the world honor you with his divine presence and blessing, and preside over you in all your deliberations: that the people may rejoice under your wise and virtuous administration, and you be so happy at last as to meet the approbation of him, who is king of kings, and lord of lords.

SHALL I be allowed a few words to this respectable audience in general,

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

THROUGH the infinite goodness of God, we as subjects of America, enjoy the precious jewel of liberty, which is of more worth than mountains of gold. How doth it become us to adore and praise that God who has exalted us in privileges above any other nation in the world. If we would

would have these blessings perpetuated to us, let us make it our chief concern to walk worthy of them. Let us examine our own hearts, whether we love the perfect system of the divine government, and delight in subjection to it. The more we are subjected to this perfect rule of right, the better we shall be qualified to perform the various duties we owe to God and our fellow men.

BUT if we live and die enemies to God, by wicked works, although we may here enjoy natural liberty, yet we must go at last to the dreadful confines of eternal darkness and despair. But if we live the life we now live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God, we shall receive that grace, through his worthiness, whereby we may persevere in well doing, unto eternal life and liberty above.

LET us then strive to fill up our remaining moments, in love to God and man, and in subjection to the examples and precepts of our divine redeemer. And as virtue is of so great necessity for civil rulers, let us not sacrifice our country and privileges, either by inattention to whom we elect, from one time to another, to rule over us, or by knowingly appointing such as have not a regard to religion and virtue. Let us also yield due submission to magistracy as an ordinance of God. Rendering honor to whom honor is due—and fear to whom fear.

MAY

MAY the Lord of heaven bless rulers and ruled, ministers and people, that we may all lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.



AMEN.

